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QUOTE OF THE DAY

“If one wants to be a world leader, one must know how to look after the entire earth and not only American industry.”

European Union Commission president Romano Prodi on Bush's recent decision to pull the U.S. out of the Kyoto Global Warming Treaty

1. PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS TO BE FEATURED ON CBS'S 'THE WEST WING' (news)

"How to get attention for your tax-cut plan? Try slipping it into a "West Wing" episode. That's what the Congressional Progressive Caucus did with its American People's Dividend proposal, a \$300 rebate for all working Americans. At a strategy dinner about a month ago, California Rep. Barbara Lee suggested that the hit show's executive producer, Lawrence O'Donnell, a former staff director of the Senate Finance Committee, might find the plan interesting. Lee called O'Donnell, and what do you know: in an upcoming scene the progressives get a nod, says a "West Wing" spokeswoman. But it's a bittersweet victory for the caucus, which has seen its rebate co-opted by Sen. Joseph Lieberman, without credit. That's fodder for another episode."

Newsweek, 4/1

<http://www.msnbc.com/news/553003.asp?0nw=n18>

2. SAYING YES TO A REBATE (editorial)

"The question to be asked about the politicians in Washington is a simple one: Can these people take yes for an answer? If they can, this country can reap the benefits of an immediate tax cut that will cushion the effects of the sudden slowdown in the economy and help prevent a slide into recession. If they can't, then ideology and dogmatism will have prevailed and the risks to everyone will have been magnified unnecessarily. Rebating part of the surplus to taxpayers would enable some of them to reduce their credit-card debt, others to supplement their unemployment benefits while they look for new jobs and still others to snap up bargains they see in a falling stock market. However it is used, it would provide a stimulus the economy needs -- without jeopardizing the long-term fiscal health of the country. It's not a complicated idea; yet it has only recently come into the policy discussion in a serious way. Everyone from Rep. Bernie Sanders, the Vermont socialist, to Senate Budget Committee Chairman Pete Domenici of New Mexico, a cautious conservative, has said: Do it."

Washington Post, Broder, 4/1

<http://washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A20120-2001Mar31.html>

3. GOP ADMITS ESTATE TAX REPEAL COULD BUST THE BUDGET (news)

"The repeal of the estate tax, once considered a sure thing, may be delayed as much as a decade by a new bipartisan estimate that says it would cost the Treasury at least \$250 billion more over 10 years than previously believed.

The House will vote this week on legislation that would eliminate the estate and gift taxes. But faced with new cost estimates from the bipartisan Joint Committee on Taxation, Republicans pushed most of the estate-tax relief to the end of the decade."

USA Today, Weisman, 4/2

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/washdc/2001-04-01-estatetax.htm>

4. BUSH: TAX CUTS FOR THE WEALTHY OVER MEDICAL RESEARCH FUNDING (news)

"President Bush is keeping his promise to help double the federal government's medical research budget, but he's facing criticism for low-balling other research vital to U.S. productivity. Democrats, scientists, corporate groups -and former Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) - have protested net cuts after inflation in the budgets of the National Science Foundation, NASA and energy research. Bush's critics, particularly Democrats, say his tax cuts are actually crowding out investments in research and endangering the long-term growth of the economy."

Roll Call, Kondracke, 4/2

<http://www.rollcall.com/pages/columns/kondracke/>

5. BUSH ALLOWS CORPORATE CRIMINALS TO DO BUSINESS WITH THE GOVERNMENT (news)

"The Bush administration yesterday ordered the suspension of a Clinton rule that would have significantly strengthened the government's ability to deny contracts to companies that have violated workplace safety, environmental and other federal laws. In a rebuff to organized labor and a nod to business, the Bush administration is moving to rescind the rule -- which took effect the day before President Bill Clinton left office -- that directs federal agencies to assess whether prospective contractors have violated federal laws. Any violations could be held against companies in the competition for the government's \$210 billion-a-year contracting business."

Washington Post, Nakashima, 3/30

<http://washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A18314-2001Mar30.html>

6. UNIONS BUILD STRENGTH WITH AIRLINE EMPLOYEES (news)

"Unions, struggling in many industries, are flying high on the nation's airlines. At Comair, pilots are walking picket lines, and Northwest mechanics and Delta pilots are threatening to walk out, too. It's symbolic of the bargaining clout that organized labor enjoys among airline workers."

Associated Press, Strobe, 3/30

http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/ap/20010330/bs/airlines_unions_2.html

7. UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE: IF NOT NOW, WHEN? (editorial)

"What better time than now to revive the idea of universal health care? There's a huge budget surplus. Meanwhile, the number of Americans lacking health insurance continues to rise (now almost 43 million, up from 38 million 10 years ago). And those who have it are paying more than ever in co-payments, deductibles and premiums. As the economy sinks, working families will have an even harder time. If they lose their jobs, their health insurance may disappear. It's a matter of simple priorities. There's no more reason to use the surplus to pay down the federal debt than to use it on a big tax cut for the wealthy. Give all Americans affordable health care instead. Yes, it's true that lowering the debt reduces federal borrowing costs, but so what? As John Maynard Keynes pointed out 60 years ago, public indebtedness per se isn't a problem. The underlying question is what the public debt is used for. If the benefits to the public exceed the

costs of borrowing from the public, it would be silly not to borrow. And with health care costs soaring and coverage declining, the benefits of universal health care are very high.”

Los Angeles Times, Reich, 4/2

<http://www.latimes.com/news/comment/20010402/t000028079.html>

8. PHARMACEUTICAL GIANT BUCKLES ON PRICES IN BRAZIL (news)

“Merck has agreed to cut the price of two AIDS medicines in Brazil, bowing to pressure from that country's government, which was threatening to develop generic copies of one of the drugs. The government, which announced the development late Thursday, has now turned up the pressure on another drug company, Hoffmann-La Roche Inc., which sells nelfinavir, a medicine also known by the brand name Viracept. The government said that it had been negotiating with Hoffmann-La Roche on a price reduction, but that the talks had so far been unsuccessful. Government officials said they might break the patent that protects Hoffmann-La Roche's monopoly on Viracept in Brazil and make a generic version in government laboratories if the company did not reduce its price.”

New York Times, Petersen, 3/31

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/31/health/31AIDS.html>

9. DOES THE WHITE HOUSE HAVE AN AIDS POLICY? (news)

“Two months into the Bush administration, the only thing left of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy is a Web site directing callers to an empty office with a telephone no one answers. The 35-member Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS isn't sure if it still exists -- four letters seeking clarification from Chairman Ronald V. Dellums to President Bush and Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson have brought no response. And the interdepartmental task force on AIDS has held no meetings. Questioned last month about his attention to the global epidemic, Bush said, "We're concerned about AIDS inside our White House, make no mistake about it." But AIDS activists, members of Congress, foreign governments and international institutions -- as well as officials working on the issue throughout the federal bureaucracy -- are growing uneasy as evidence of high-level engagement has yet to materialize.”

Washington Post, DeYoung, 3/30

<http://washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A18542-2001Mar30.html>

10. EUROPE ON BUSH'S ENVIRO POLICY: 'IRRESPONSIBLE,' 'ARROGANT,' 'SABOTAGE' (news)

“European leaders frequently bristle about American behavior, but President Bush's abrupt decision this week to abandon a treaty on global warming has provoked even more than the usual level of anger and frustration. "Irresponsible," "arrogant," even "sabotage" are just a few of the charges that Europeans have leveled at Mr. Bush since he announced his refusal to follow through on the treaty, the Kyoto Protocol. And European Union representatives will take their case in favor of the accord to Washington on Monday, though their arguments are not expected to prevail. The response is so intense in part because the decision has aggravated a mixture of grudges that have gnawed at Europeans for years. They are angry that the United States appears oblivious to widespread environmental concerns across most of Europe. They are frustrated that the United States, by virtue of its size, can undermine a treaty that was negotiated by more than 100 countries.”

New York Times, Andrews, 3/31

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/01/world/01GERM.html>

11. HOW CAN A PRESIDENT JOKE ABOUT POISON IN THE WATER? (news)

“Being witty about poisoned drinking water isn't easy. It requires a certain obtuse savoir-faire. Our president gave it a go Thursday night at a press dinner here. "As you know, we're studying safe levels for arsenic in drinking water," he told the crowd of radio and TV correspondents at the Washington Hilton. "To base our decision on sound science, the scientists told us we needed to test the water glasses of about 3,000 people. Thank you for participating." I guess a guy who can yuk it up about a woman he has executed in Texas can yuk it up about anything. But it was a creepy moment. The President seems to have no engagement with contemporary America, except by virtue of being the president of the United States.”

New York Times, Dowd, 4/1

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/01/opinion/01DOWD.html>

12. POLL: AMERICANS BELIEVE GLOBAL WARMING IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM (news)

“Three fourths of Americans consider global warming to be a serious problem, according to a poll taken after the Bush administration announced it will pull out of an international agreement aimed at combating climate change. In addition, two-thirds said President Bush should develop a plan to reduce the emission of the so-called greenhouse gases that may contribute to global warming, according to the CNN-Time poll released Sunday. By a 3-1 margin, Americans said they believe emissions of gases like carbon dioxide are causing global temperature increases.”

Associated Press, 4/1

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/national/AP-Global-Warming-Poll.html>

13. ENERGY COMPANIES USE CRISIS TO RISE TO TOP OF FORTUNE 500 (news)

“Surging energy prices in the United States gave oil, gas and power companies new fuel in their ascension of the annual Fortune 500. Oil giant Exxon Mobil Corp. surpassed automaker General Motors Corp., rising to No. 1 from No. 3 with the company's highest-ever \$210 billion in revenue for 2000. GM, which had revenue of \$184.6 billion, fell to No. 3. Other energy companies fared well in 2000, with Enron Corp., at No. 7, rising from No. 18. Duke Energy Corp. shot up to No. 17 from 69 and Reliant Energy Inc. made it up to No. 55

from 114. Energy companies benefited from a surge in revenue brought about by falling supplies, utility deregulation, soaring natural gas prices and OPEC's maneuvering to keep oil prices high."

Associated Press, 4/1

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/business/AP-Fortune-500.html>

14. BUSH ENERGY SECRETARY RENEWS CALL FOR DOMESTIC DRILLING (news)

"Saying the U.S. energy crunch will probably worsen this summer, Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham called Sunday for increased domestic drilling. With California already wrestling with electricity shortages, Abraham said other cities and states could feel the pinch as the temperatures heat up. Abraham said the country needs to diversify its energy sources, citing oil drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as one part of that plan. Other areas, he said, could also be opened for drilling."

CNN, 4/1

<http://www.cnn.com/2001/ALLPOLITICS/04/01/energy.abraham/index.html>

15. 'RAVAGING' ALASKA IS 'SHORTSIGHTED' AND 'UNREALISTIC'

"Those who would ravage Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge argue that we must constantly exploit all possible new oil sources to meet growing energy needs. That's shortsighted and unrealistic. The argument's basic flaw is a refusal to acknowledge (1) that oil supplies, however great, are limited, meaning someday the world must learn to depend on alternatives, and (2) oil isn't the best energy source anyway."

Des Moines Register, Editorial Board, 4/2

<http://desmoinesregister.com/news/stories/c5917686/14207449.html>

16. MCCAIN-FEINGOLD HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR PUBLIC FINANCING OF ELECTIONS (news)

"Will the McCain-Feingold bill lead to more fundamental democratic reform? Getting rid of unlimited soft-money donations, after all, is only a baby step toward the full reclaiming of our democracy. A next logical step would be public financing of elections. Four states have recently enacted clean election public-financing systems via citizen ballot initiatives, largely freeing state candidates from the need to fund-raise."

Boston Globe, Kuttner, 4/1

<http://www.commondreams.org/views01/0401-04.htm>

17. WHITE HOUSE 'DRIVEN BY RIGHT-WING IDEOLOGY' EVEN MORE THAN REAGAN (editorial)

"We are learning something these days about the power of a willful president. Without a popular mandate, George W. Bush is making radical changes that will have long-term consequences for this country and the world. He is making them in a hurry, and for the moment there are no checks or balances to stop him. Day after day headlines tell us of fundamental policy reversals. Mr. Bush spurns the global effort, going back to the first Bush presidency, to reduce global warming. A string of Bush administration decisions has halted steps to protect the environment. Arsenic in drinking water, roads in national forests and so on: limits are going to be "restudied." This is the most radical administration in living American memory. I use the word deliberately. Today's right calls itself "conservative," but it is not that. Conservatives want to conserve. That is why Teddy Roosevelt started the national parks and the conservation movement. George W. Bush and his people are driven by right-wing ideology to an extent not remotely touched by even the Reagan administration."

New York Times, Lewis, 3/31

<http://www.commondreams.org/views01/0331-04.htm>

18. CEO'S REAPING EVEN BIGGER SALARIES AS STOCKS TUMBLE (news)

"For the last decade, the chief executives of America's large corporations have offered their investors an implicit bargain. The executives made their companies ever more profitable, helping to create one of history's greatest bull markets. As a reward, they paid themselves more handsomely than ever before. Some made \$100 million in a given year. By the end of the 1990's, the average head of a big company took home more than \$10 million before taxes. Then, in 2000, sales slowed. Companies warned that profit forecasts were too optimistic. Stocks fell. To make up for the hit their portfolios took when the market dropped, they convinced their boards to give them thousands of additional stock options. Many executives also developed a newfound interest in dowdy old cash, winning moderate raises to their base salaries and huge increases in their bonuses and perks. In short, the notion that corporate America pays its top managers based on their performance went the same way in 2000 as the idea that Internet stocks should be valued based on "page views." As a result, the fortunes of the people who run the nation's biggest companies and the people who own those companies — the shareholders — diverged sharply."

New York Times, Leonhardt, 4/1

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/01/business/01COMP.html>